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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 006681

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PREL CO MOPS PTER

SUBJECT: ACCUSATIONS OF COLMIL THIRD BRIGADE FOOD

CONFISCATIONS AGAINST INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN CAUCA APPEAR

NOT WARRANTED

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Patricia Dahl, New York affiliate director of Wisconsin-based human rights NGO, Colombia Support Network (CSN), met with the Embassy on June 27 to discuss alleged food confiscations by the Colombian Military Third Brigade against civilian groups in Alta Naya, Cauca Department. Dahl was accompanied by Paez (or "Nasa") indigenous governor of Alta Naya, Enrique Guetio. Although the Third Brigade has admitted confiscating food from community bodegas and private homes, they insist the items in question -- which included gasoline and drug precursor chemicals -- have been routinely given to the FARC for drug processing. Guetio admitted to Emboffs that the items taken by the Third Brigade were used for drug processing by his tribe, and accused Afro-Colombians and farmers (or "campesinos") in the area of doing the same. However, he declined to say whether these items were given to the FARC as the Third Brigade alleges. End Summary.

CONFISCATIONS

2. (C) Dahl, a vocal critic of U.S. policy, compared Plan Colombia to USG efforts in Iraq, calling both "evidence of U.S. human rights violations." She alleged that civilians living in Cauca are "forced" to grow illicit crops for economic reasons, and accused COLMIL of having a "free pass" to confiscate. Dahl displayed a letter she received written in Spanish and dated February 16, 2005 from Brigadier General Perez Molina (Third Brigade Commander) saying that the confiscations were done because they believed the materials found in private homes and bodegas were given to the FARC for drug processing. Guetio admitted that his people -- as well as Afro-Colombian and campesino groups in the area -- are directly involved with illicit crop cultivation, were keeping food, gasoline, and drug precursor chemicals in private homes and bodegas shared by the whole community, but declined to say whether there was any connection with indigenous or other communities to the FARC. He said a police report ("denuncio") was submitted in early February to the local Procurador's office regarding confiscated items taken on January 20, but no investigation had been conducted. Guetio accused the Third Brigade of forcing illicit crop growers to "pay taxes" on precursor chemicals and gasoline.

SECURITY

3. (C) Guetio insisted COLMIL was not securing the peace. He claimed the COLMIL was attacking indigenous in the area. Guetio asserted the April 2005 FARC attack on the population in Toribio as orchestrated by COLMIL. He gave no specific information to substantiate this claim. Guetio mentioned that he met with Third Brigade Lt. Col. Bayron Gabriel Carvajal about security and food confiscations in April. He said the meeting was cordial but yielded little.

FUMIGATION

4. (C) Guetio and Dahl asserted fumigation in Cauca has hurt children and livestock, as well as destroyed crops. Neither had specifics with the exception of a case from 1993 where Guetio claimed 23 children and several animals were killed. Guetio said an investigation was never completed by the Fiscalia due to pressure by the FARC and GOC who did not want details of the case released.
WOOD